

LIFE

A post-confirmation
course for teenagers



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& TOM CALUORI**



ABOUT THE AUTHORS

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FOREWORD

ACCOMPANYING YOUNG PEOPLE

There is a well-known story told about a visitor to Ireland who pulls up at a crossroads and asks directions to Dublin from a local man. The man replies: "You could go straight ahead, take a left, then a right, then third right again, then straight over the roundabout, then left at the pub, then ask again... but if I were you I wouldn't start from here at all."

So often an adult considering the prospect of working with a group of young people, especially as they reach the teenage years, wonders where to start and reaches the conclusion: "I don't want to start from here – I want a nice number of well-mannered, appreciative, faith-filled, dedicated, responsible young people for my group".

Other adults may be tempted to take the well-worn phrase "Start where they are at!" as a recommendation to remain where they appear to be and never offer anything but bland acquiescence to their culture and values.

The fact is that young people are in two places at once. They are immersed in the reality of what it is to be a teenager in today's world with all its advantages and challenges, hopes and pressures,

opportunities and disappointments. They are sons and daughters in families that can be close and supportive or dispersed and dysfunctional. They can so easily suffer from low self-image and lack of confidence that makes them shy and awkward. They are little protected from the power of the media, aggressive advertising and peer opinion. General secular social attitudes do not encourage them to be believers.

At the same time they are miracles of creative love, children of God, fashioned in God's own image with a sacred dignity and divine destiny. Within each is the capacity for amazing things.

An adult who sets out on the path of accompanying young people on their journey through these precious teenage years must hold both these two places in clear view and be convinced that accompaniment is a special art to be practised, worked upon, reflected on, improved upon and re-worked.

Pope Francis explicitly refers to this in his exhortation *Evangelii Gaudium* under the heading "Personal accompaniment in processes of growth":

In a culture paradoxically suffering from anonymity and at the same time obsessed with the details of other people's lives, shamelessly given over to morbid curiosity, the Church must look more closely and sympathetically at others whenever necessary. In our world, ordained ministers and other pastoral workers can make present the fragrance of Christ's closeness and his personal gaze. The Church will have to initiate everyone – priests, religious and laity – into this "art of accompaniment" which teaches us to remove our sandals before the sacred ground of the other.

Note the two phrases "to look more closely and sympathetically" and "to remove our sandals before the sacred ground of the other". See the truth of people's reality, accept the truth of faith.

Accompanying a group in this way is a formation for the lay apostolate, that is, the calling and mission of baptised lay people to transform the secular world. This may seem rather grandiose but it is a vocation that begins with relating faith to everyday circumstances and with very small steps of outgoing concern and friendship. The role of the adult companion towards the young people is illuminated by considering it under three aspects which follow on from one another but at the same time overlap considerably: to call, to form and to send out (Vocation, Formation and Mission). These are explored in the following introduction, but as we begin, take care not to approach this thinking that we are the ones who are going to do the calling forming and sending. Not at all. Remember that this is the Lord's work. We are there like John the Baptist to prepare the way, to grow smaller as he grows greater.

Mgr John Marsland
President of Ushaw College
National Chaplain to IMPACT/YCW



INTRODUCTION

Thank you for accompanying a group of young people on their journey of life and faith. Your dedication will speak volumes to them, not only about your commitment to young people, but also about the great worth the Church places on them, reflecting the unsurpassable love that God has for each and every one of them.

This practical expression of yours, showing young people that we care, and that they have a valued place in our communities, is the most important aspect of *Life*. You are beginning a journey with them which should be an exploration of life and faith. The Catholic Bishop's Conference of England and Wales, in their document on working with young people, says:

Catholic youth ministry accompanies young people through the transition from childhood to adulthood, so that they may deepen their encounter with Christ and be encouraged in faith, empowered with hope and supported in love to be the person they are called to be, now and in the future... The community provides nourishment for its young people so that they may encounter and come to know Christ.

Called to a Noble Adventure, Catholic Bishop's Conference of England and Wales

As the adult companion you are taking an active part in offering spiritual "nourishment" to the young people. Like so many of us you are probably very busy. You may or may not have prior experience of working with young people – and you wouldn't be alone if you were at a loss as to where to start.

The thought of starting a new initiative for a group of young people might well seem daunting, so an overall direction and methodology are essential. Based on many years of experience working with young people in the Church, this is the supportive framework that *Life* seeks to provide.

Life can be described as a formation programme for teenagers, but it can also be viewed as a tool to turn to (rather than a course to work through), to support you in accompanying the young people. The methodology within the themed chapters provides you with the foundational tools as you in turn walk alongside the young people and provide them with opportunities and encouragement as they reflect upon their lives in the light of faith. You will help them consider their hopes for the future, explore their influences and relationships, and discover their potential to contribute to the world.

THE ROLE OF THE ADULT COMPANION

A key task of the adult companion is to facilitate young people in their journey of self-discovery, to support and respect them as they go at their own pace. Like Eli awoken by Samuel, the adult companion enables the young people to listen to the word of God as it is addressed to them in the ordinary events of their lives.

If faith is to be real and if young people are to move to ownership of their faith, then it must resonate with them in their reality – their relationships, their culture and their everyday lives, so they can ask: "What is God calling me to in this moment?" Discernment in small groups, alongside one's peers, is an excellent starting point for this, and is at the heart of the method in *Life*.

There are three main elements to your role as adult companion. Although they are interwoven and happen at the same time, they also have a natural flow:

- *Calling* young people to consider their God-given purpose;
- *Forming* them in faith;
- *Sending* them out to transform the world.

TO CALL YOUNG PEOPLE (VOCATION)

The first call is the invitation to join the group – and the emphasis here should be on invitation. Of course we can still use the communication methods of the parish: a note in a newsletter or a notice at the back of church or in the school entrance hall. And, if your parish has the means, it could be a message on Twitter or a Facebook post (following safeguarding guidelines). But, if it is to be effective, there will most certainly be a personal element: a friend's face or voice, a prompt or invitation from someone they trust and respect.

This is the apparently random process through which the Lord will call some young people to start a significant journey. Be attentive and prayerful to notice those who might be open to God's call. They will not necessarily be the obvious ones. When you have identified some young people to invite, consider how to invite them and whether you are the best person to do it. Would the confirmation catechist, or the parishioner who helps with the football team be better placed to do it? The story of Jesus gathering his first disciples in John 1 gives interesting guidelines. His invitation is "Come and see." He does not embark on a thorough explanation of his mission – he encourages them to take a first step. They in turn bring others – Andrew brings Peter and Philip introduces Nathanael. We do not need to start with a crowd. Gather a few and let them "Come and see." The young people will bring others.

And they will come. They are waiting to be asked. They will come in response to a personal word of invitation, an expression of belief in what they have to offer or encouragement from their peer group. Call them for what you see within them. "We are starting a group, and I think you have something unique to bring to it," is so much stronger than an explanation burdened with tired church language. They can be helped by a chance to "give it a try" without making a full commitment, backed by wholehearted belief on our part that what is on offer is a great adventure.

The call is ongoing, it does not end when a young person joins a group. There is always another step, another challenge, to increase commitment, take on responsibility, reach out to others and grow in faith. Our task is to accompany this ongoing call.

TO FORM YOUNG PEOPLE (FORMATION)

Our wish is that young people will grow in faith, fulfil their potential and discover the riches of

faith in Jesus Christ and of being a member of the Church. Do not impose your own faith on the young people, as each of them will be at a different point on his or her faith journey. A quiet, steady, no-frills affirmation of the fact that you are a believer in Christ without trying to impose any belief on or elicit any commitment from the young people, will give their faith room to flourish in its own time with God's grace and their openness.

The first requirement in accompanying a group is very simple: to be there. Your regular presence is already a big statement. It says, "I think you are worth it." Our presence needs to be consistent and also attentive. And we must be in it for the long haul. True growth takes time. We cannot expect quick results or immediate success.

Further to this underlying commitment and attentiveness there is need for a sound methodology of development. The insights and method of Joseph Cardijn, founder of the Young Christian Worker Movement, are presented in *Life* as a way of facing the real situations that young people experience and giving them a way forward inspired by the Gospel message and a closer relationship with Christ.

TO SEND YOUNG PEOPLE OUT (MISSION)

Being active, working together and achieving something concrete brings many benefits. It helps the group to gel, it increases confidence, gives a sense of responsibility and strengthens the group's identity. The role of the adult companion is to work behind the scenes and not to take on lots of the tasks. Often this involves the risk of things not being done or being done differently to how we would do it. Great patience and trust are required. At the same time you must be wise about what is realistic and give good advice when young people are planning an activity.

Two maxims were often repeated by Joseph Cardijn relating to action and responsibility:

- "Do it for them, do it with them and let them do it by themselves."
- "Always by the young people, never without the companion."

This is always the aim of the adult companion: that the young people take the reins – preparing the room, leading the meeting, saying the prayer, communicating to people outside the group, looking after the finances, making refreshments, clearing up after an event, reporting to the media. But it is always accompanied by our loving attention.

A NOTE ABOUT THIS PROGRAMME

*Life is recommended as a follow-up to parish confirmation catechesis when you have a ready-made group, some of whom may be keen to continue. Don't be tempted to take a break. Many parishes pause for the summer, thinking it is good to give the young people who have just been confirmed a rest. However, it usually proves very hard to re-gather the group at a later date. It is much more effective to work with the confirmation catechists to introduce **Life** immediately after confirmation, as an offer to those in the group who wish to continue meeting.*

*In addition **Life** can be used with young people in a variety of other settings, e.g., within a school context, with those confirmed several years ago, or with teenagers who have not been confirmed.*

THE PASTORAL CYCLE: A WAY OF LINKING EVERYDAY LIFE AND FAITH

Life uses the pastoral cycle approach to Christian formation: **SEE-JUDGE-ACT**. This is a tried-and-tested method of helping people to link their experience and faith through action. First developed by Cardinal Joseph Cardijn for the young people in the Young Christian Workers, since the Second Vatican Council it has been the method offered by the Church as the practical means to train lay people to live and act in the world.

Training for the apostolate cannot consist only in being taught theory; on that account there is need, right from the start of training, to learn gradually and prudently to see all things in the light of faith, to judge and act always in its light...

**Vatican II Decree on the
Apostolate of Lay People**

It is a process of observing, discerning and planning action, forming young people to be aware of their surroundings, to reflect in faith, to ask what is good or bad about a situation and to move towards some kind of response in lived Christian action. The method gives young people responsibility and trains them in leadership.

Give me leaders and I will raise the world.

Cardinal Joseph Cardijn

Your role as the adult companion is to help the young people through the process of **SEE**, **JUDGE** and **ACT**. We do this through enquiry:

- First, we support young people to enquire into the events and circumstances of their lives and other people's.
- Next, we support them in enquiring into what the Christian view on these things might be.
- Finally we encourage them to enquire into what they can do about it.

The word "enquire" thereby sets the tone and encapsulates the methodology of the process. **Life** is structured as a series of "enquiries", which help the young people to **SEE**, **JUDGE** and **ACT**.

SEE

The **SEE** part of the enquiry takes as the starting point the young people themselves. The task of the adult companion is to encourage them to share their own situations and those of people they know. They may share a situation, conversation or event from their daily life. What they share should be real and factual. It should have made them think a little, feel good or bad, get angry or want to help someone. The questions asked will begin *What?, Who?, How?*

JUDGE

Then follows a discernment or reflection upon the situations and events that have been **SEEN**, in the **JUDGE** stage of the enquiry. Key questions will include: What do we think about this? Is this good or bad? Is this right or wrong? Why/why not? What is the Christian view?

The **JUDGE** includes an enquiry into a Gospel passage, which can be applied to the situation shared within the group. The main thrust of this part of the enquiry is: "Could/should things be different? If so, how?"

ACT

SEEING and **JUDGING** should always lead to **ACTION**. Action can be taken by individual members or the group as whole. The **ACT** part of the enquiry is crucial if the group is not to be merely a talking shop. It is through the actions decided upon and carried out that the young people grow and begin to see Christianity as

relevant to daily living. After all, the aim of the adult companion is to walk with the young people as they grow in faith to become fully mature Christians with a sense of mission.

Action can be seen in terms of **serving, educating** and **representing**. Service means carrying out some kind of action to meet a need. Education is about raising the awareness of others. Representation is about standing up for those in need and bringing the matters that have arisen to the attention of those with the ability to bring about change. It is about being a prophetic voice.

In the *Life* enquiries, **serve, educate** and **represent** are referred to as **HELP, TELL IT** and **STAND UP**.

REVIEW

After the first enquiry, each subsequent enquiry includes a **review** of what has gone before. Whether things go right or wrong it is always good to review what has happened. Where there is success, it needs to be celebrated, recognised and affirmed, to give the young people confidence and a sense of real achievement. Where things do not work out, it is good to help them pick up the pieces, learn from mistakes and see the good that did happen. Remember that every step is a big victory.

The adult companion should look for opportunities for the young people to review their actions, their responsibilities and the deeper meaning of what they are involved in.

RECORD SHEETS

The **record sheet** is crucial for the review, and for the success of any agreed action. Taking notes signifies the seriousness of the meeting and enables the group to check on progress. Every time something is agreed, a member of the group should take notes of any issues raised, any conclusions reached and any actions that have been decided.

If you are working with several smaller groups, each should have a note-taker who can use the record sheets and then report back to the whole group. Ideally this task will be allocated to a different person at each meeting or enquiry – you may want to encourage the young people to discuss and decide the best approach for themselves.

In addition, you will find it important to keep your own record of anything that has been said and

agreed. It could be that you keep the flipchart paper – you may well find that notes get lost between meetings and it will be very useful to have your own as a backup!

CIRCLE OF INFLUENCE

A central theme to this programme is encouraging the young people to identify where they can be a positive influence in people's lives and thereby grow as young Christian leaders.

The **Circle of Influence** chart is completed in the second enquiry and offers a tool to help the young people reflect on their lives and opportunities for action. When they are considering how each theme impacts upon their own experience at the **SEE** stage, the chart can help to expand their thinking to consider the friends, family, peers and even strangers who play a part in their lives. Similarly, at the **ACT** stage, a glance at the **Circle of Influence** chart will remind them of those people and help them think about who is in need of support. Encourage group members to update their chart regularly to include new people who have come into their circle of influence.

When the young people are considering how to respond to the people on their chart, small things are very important: a kindly gesture, a supportive comment, a useful question, a bit of time sacrificed, a responsibility fulfilled. The adult companion can help to affirm these kinds of actions in relation to the young people's family, friends and contacts.

YOUNG PEOPLE LEAD

It is the adult companion's role always to seek to give young people responsibility, no matter how small, so as to encourage their sense of self-worth. For example, when the group first meets, the adult companion will need to ask the questions during the enquiries to enable the young people to share sensibly and ensure that the process is followed. However, as soon as is practical, and ideally in the second meeting, the adult companion should offer this responsibility to the young people, encouraging members to take turns in leading the enquiry. You should meet the young people who will lead in advance of each meeting. This can be done at the end of the meeting before, or during free time between meetings.

The young person who is leading will ask the questions during the enquiry (**SEE, JUDGE** and

ACT). Be clear that it will be their role, with your support, to encourage and enable all the members of the group to contribute. This is a difficult task for some young people and should be approached with care. In your preparation encourage the young leader to imagine how the session will unfold. How will people in the group react to the questions? Which questions might be difficult? Who might need encouragement? What follow-up questions might be useful?

The young people may need encouragement to share. At this point the leader may find it helpful to ask very direct questions, e.g., “Do we have friends who have experienced that?” Help the young leader to think of likely situations the young people may respond to, to get them started. Another tip is to suggest discussing a topic in pairs before they share with the whole group.

In addition to the young person leading the enquiry, there are other opportunities to get members of the group involved. They can be invited to read the Gospel passage and also the stories that recount young people’s experiences. Be sure to allow any readers time to prepare their reading if they wish.

PRAYER TIME

The time at the end of each enquiry is devoted to bringing the insights, reflections and commitments together in prayer. A format is offered for you in each chapter.

This should last around seven minutes. Too long and you will lose the young people’s attention, yet it should allow enough time to enable what has happened in the meeting to “settle” into the group.

The best approach is to connect the prayer with the theme of the session rather than making it a “bolt-on” exercise. However, there may be occasions – such as when a session has been particularly intense or challenging – when you can see that it needs a different approach.

The aim here is to introduce prayer as an organic part of daily life rather than a pious, perfunctory exercise.

Following are some suggestions for prayer time:

- Background music may help to provide a prayerful setting. Note, however, that you may need to check with the venue that the appropriate licences are in place.

- Sample stories and applications are included in this book. However, if you can think of one that is more appropriate for the group, use that instead. Ideally it would be read by one of the young people.
- The prayer time concludes with a closing prayer from the young people’s booklet and a blessing said together or given by a member of the clergy if present. There are books with blessings available but the following is a good example: “May the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ the Love of God the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with us all, now and evermore” (2 Corinthians 13:13).
- The closing prayer includes an invitation for the Holy Spirit to come. Young people who have been confirmed have received the Holy Spirit sacramentally, but all can pray for the Holy Spirit to come, asking for whatever gifts are needed. The young people can be empowered to live as fully alive members of the Church. The purpose of *Life* is to help the young people to see what this might mean in practice. They should be reminded to call upon the Holy Spirit to empower them each day as they grow as young Christian leaders.

PRACTICALITIES

SAFEGUARDING

Before you begin inviting young people into a group, speak to the safeguarding representative in your parish to ensure that you are aware of all the procedures you need to follow to work with young people below the age of eighteen. As well as being safely recruited to your role as adult companion (which will involve a check of your criminal record) you will need to be familiar with the good practice guidelines of how to work with young people and to create and maintain a safe and supportive environment.

One of these guidelines is the required adult-to-young person ratio. For a small group of teenagers this usually means two adults working alongside one another. The other adult may not need to take on the same responsibility as you (although it is good if they do). They could, for example, welcome the young people and prepare the room, without taking on an accompanying role. However, they should be present so that you are never in a situation where you will be left alone with just one young person.

THE GROUP

Generally six to ten young people is a good number for group sharing. If there are more young people coming to the meeting, smaller groups may need to be formed as part of the session, with young people in each small group taking responsibility to lead the enquiries.

TIMING

It is highly recommended that the group meets every week at a set time and place to ensure continuity. Enquiries may be approached in two main ways; either taking one enquiry each week or else over three weeks – **SEE** the first week, then **JUDGE** the second, and finally **ACT** on the third week.

To cover all aspects of the enquiry in one meeting would take approximately one and a half hours depending upon the group. To take the enquiry over three weeks would allow more time for each stage, as well as some social time.

Social time is an opportunity for the young people to develop friendships within the group, to relax and build a sense of belonging. Music and refreshments should be provided by the young people. Someone can be chosen to collect a small subscription each week to pay for this. The weekly sub also helps the group to feel that it is their group.

THE PLACE AND MATERIALS

At the beginning of the first session, the meeting area should be set up ready for prayer with chairs in a circle and somewhere to place the basket for the individual prayers. If you are working with a single group you might want to use a flipchart and marker pens. In subsequent sessions you can invite the young people to prepare the space. Slips of paper and pencils should be at hand. A candle or other suitable focus (such as an open Bible) is placed in the centre as a reminder of God's presence.

TIPS FOR ADULT COMPANIONS

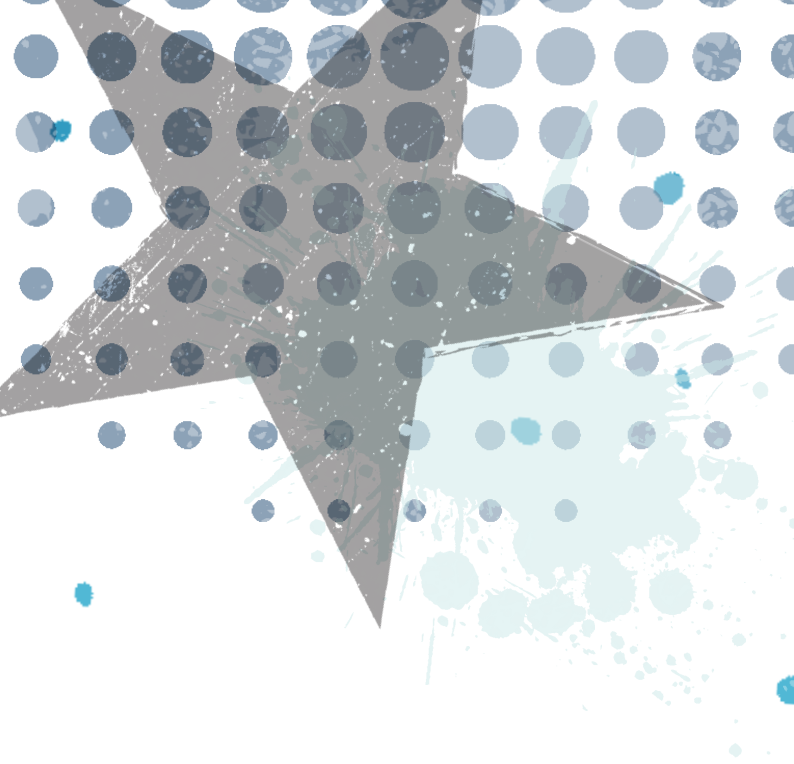
- Pray for the young people and for the gifts to be an effective adult companion. The following prayer, similar to the suggested concluding prayer in each chapter, may be helpful to your own prayerful preparation:



PRAYER FOR YOUNG PEOPLE

Father, pour out your Spirit
upon our young people,
and grant them
a new vision of your glory,
a new experience of your power,
a new faithfulness to your Word; and
a new consecration to your service,
that your love may grow in them,
and your kingdom come.
Through Christ our Lord.
Amen.

- Prepare the meeting by going carefully through the enquiry beforehand; try to anticipate any problems or sensitivities that may arise.
- Begin the meeting with a prayer and invite the young people to offer their own intentions – some guidance may be needed here.
- There are ice-breakers suggested to begin each new chapter, and extras in the Appendix if enquiries stretch over several meetings. This informal start, with an ice-breaker or game, is always a good idea. It helps the young people to lighten up and get to know one another better.
- Ask for a report from the young people of any action arising from the previous meeting. Ensure that the action is noted.
- Before beginning each enquiry, the questions asked in the the **News Round** section invite the young people to review their recent experiences and raise any concerns which are not necessarily relevant to the session topic. Keep this brief but with due respect to the young people who are brave enough to share. If the group wishes to follow up anything which is shared, use the guide in the Appendix to accompany them in this process.
- For the enquiry proper, if necessary divide the group into smaller groups of about six to ten. Do this by giving each person a number so that it is not just friendship groups and that no



one feels left out. Keep the groups the same as far as possible each week. This is important so that issues can be properly followed up.

- Encourage each group to appoint a note-taker and someone to lead the enquiry. Arrange to meet the young person who will be leading this meeting beforehand to prepare.
- The young people should be asked to speak one at a time and to listen respectfully to each other. The quiet ones especially will not speak up if they fear being ridiculed or made fun of.
- The young people must be free not to contribute, but gently encouraged to do so. Encourage the group to respect confidentiality.
- The adult companion should offer confidentiality to the group and also insist on it from the group. However, if you consider that a young person's safety is at risk, you may need to seek guidance from a professional body, such as the police or Health Service.
- The more vocal group members may need to be encouraged to give others the opportunity to speak. A good tip is to ask the more vocal members to lead the enquiry. Use your preparation time with them to emphasise the importance of encouraging each member to speak if they wish.

Giving them the responsibility to manage other people's participation will often discourage the leader from speaking too much.

- As well as encouraging the young people to make notes for reflection and follow-up at each meeting, take notes of your own, to enable you to check and confirm what has been said and agreed.

VISION FOR YOUTH MINISTRY

We cherish young people for who they are now, for all the energy, gifts, joys and challenges that they bring to our communities and for who they are to become. Young people are both our present and our future. During this period of their lives they have a unique role to play and a unique voice to be heard. Young people should enjoy happy and healthy lives, with the support, love and encouragement needed for each one of them to grow into faithful adults in love with Christ and committed to the building of the kingdom of God.

Called to a Noble Adventure, Catholic Bishop's Conference of England and Wales.

HOPES AND DREAMS